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An Unparalleled Opportunity.

One of the most urgent questions now before the nation is whether the immediate effect of the European war is to be to greatly increase the armaments of the United States. Whatever the outcome may be at the present time of the army and navy contest in Congress, the conflict is certain to go on for years, and all the friends of peace in every quarter of the nation must be on the alert and not allow themselves to be deceived by specious pretexts. Militarism has wrecked Europe, and will wreck our America just as surely, in spite of splendid international arbitration treaties and courts, if it is not driven to the wall and given its death blow. What is the outlook?

On January 16 the Naval Committee reported to the House of Representatives the Naval Appropriation bill, which carried, all told, the sum of \$145,500,000. Enormous as this sum is, the report was

considered, under the circumstances, to be quite conservative. It carried only \$3,000,000 more than the naval budget of the previous year. But several members of Congress and numerous citizens have been urging, and are still urging, much larger appropriations for national defense, whatever that may mean. Instead of two huge battleships, recommended by the committee, certain members of both Houses are clamoring for *three*, or even *four*, new dreadnaughts. The Army Appropriation bill, which has just been passed on January 22, appropriating \$101,000,000 (last year it was \$94,000,000 plus), was treated in the same way, the militarist Representatives fighting to the last for additional appropriations, though they met with no encouragement from either Democratic or Republican leaders.

It is at least encouraging to know that the Naval Committee has rejected all the proposals, appeals, threats, and direful prophesies put forth in favor of further increasing the appropriations for the navy, and has limited itself to practically the budget of last year. There is reason to believe that the committee's appropriations will not be added to on the floor of the House, though a number of Representatives are proposing to make a big fight for larger sums. On the other hand, many members will speak and vote against the committee's report, as entirely extravagant, and there is a possible chance that the two battleships may be reduced to one. Certainly this ought to be the result. There are no enemies in sight from any quarter of the horizon. Two years ago the appropriation, voted for by both the House and Senate with considerable majorities, provided for only one new dreadnaught, and there is not a particle of reason in favor of any increase of that number now. The vote for two ships last year seems to have been dictated purely by political considerations—anything to beat the other party, as it was election year.

Our brave militarists of the ultra patriotic type are hard to understand. Are they determined to have war at any rate, reason or no reason? There may have been some ground for fear of war in past years, but none whatever at the present time. The European nations are involved in a war so extensive, so deadly and ruinous, as would make it impossible now for any one of them to have a conflict with the United States with its hundred millions of people. They are destroying their armies and navies as fast as possible. The great armies of Germany, Russia, France, Austria, England and the rest are being beaten to pieces with incredible swiftness. The mere thought of how many millions of men have been slaughtered during the six months of the fighting makes one stand paralyzed at the recital. In less